



Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

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M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Individuals Involved in the Assessment of Students with Disabilities

FROM: Robert A. Marra, Student Learning
Michele Walker, Student Assessment

SUBJECT: Assessment Options for the 2009 / 2010 School Year

DATE: January 30, 2009

This MEMO is being sent to provide school personnel with updated information regarding assessment options for the 2009 / 2010 school year.

Modified Achievement Standards

In April of 2007, the US Department of Education released regulatory guidance to states regarding the optional development of an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards. Indiana elected to proceed with the development of such alternative assessment for students in grades 3 through 8.

For the past 19 months, teams of school personnel have worked to develop a framework using the Indiana Academic Standards and the question format from ISTEP+ in order to help provide Indiana students with an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards. In the fall of 2009, we will pilot an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards, with the goal of having the assessment fully available for the spring 2010 assessment window. The criteria for participating in this assessment are enclosed.

Alternate Achievement Standards

In May of 2008, the Indiana State Board of Education approved two sets of criteria for student participation in the ISTAR assessment: Independent Functioning and Academic Competence. These previously-distributed criteria are also included with this MEMO. It is our intention to set new cut scores for each criterion in the coming months. In anticipation of increased assessment options for the 2009 / 2010 school year, we have expanded the ISTAR assessment cut scores for the current school year. As those new cut scores are determined, information will be shared with the field through the Department's website.

Please note that due to the shortened timeline for returning assessment results to educators, the ISTAR review process that has typically occurred during the month of November will be deleted.

Any dispute with an ISTAR assessment will be handled through the request for rescore process currently in place with ISTEP+. As we move forward into the 2009 / 2010 school year, we will develop a process of ongoing portfolio assessment spot checks for students who are assessed using the ISTAR assessment. As decisions are made regarding the process for those ISTAR spot checks, information will be distributed via the Department's website. What this means for you as an administrator is that you need to ensure your teachers review the completed rating of each student to ensure it accurately reflects the student's educational functioning. Also please note that because our students who are taking ISTAR do not take end of course assessments, they will need to be assessed at Grade 9 and Grade 10 from this point forward.

Accommodations on ISTEP+

In addition, accommodation guidance is being reviewed and updated for students who participate in the ISTEP+ assessment. Those revised accommodations will be available for case conference committees to use in the upcoming weeks.

A Continuum of Assessment Options

The Indiana assessment system will eventually include ISTAR Independent Functioning, ISTAR Academic Competence, an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards (aka the 2% assessment), ISTEP+ with accommodations, ISTEP+ without accommodations and end-of-course assessments. Teachers also have Acuity and Wireless Generation available (even off-grade level) for diagnostic assessments of the students they serve although these are not part of the Federally-required accountability system. We are hopeful that these expanded options will enable school personnel to find the appropriate assessment(s) that meet each student's individual needs.

In preparation for individual student assessment decisions for the 2009 / 2010 school year, it will be helpful to review each of the criteria we have provided with this MEMO. Case conference committees are encouraged to analyze the eligibility criteria and to make student-specific decisions for participation in the Indiana assessment system for the 2009 / 2010 school year. From this point forward ISTAR will be administered (open for teachers to begin rating students) from March 1 through April 30 each calendar year. Therefore, teachers need to be notified that ISTAR assessments for the Spring 2009 testing session will open on March 1, 2009 and close as of midnight on April 30, 2009.

As always, should you have any questions regarding this information, please do not hesitate to contact us here at the Indiana Department of Education.